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Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization

Elimination of coercive economic measures as a means of political and economic compulsion

Environment and sustainable development

Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family

Human rights questions

Report of the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization

Letter dated 17 September 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit herewith a study setting forth the effects on the people of Iraq of the unjust economic sanctions, with respect to the economy, health, the environment, agriculture and culture.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, under agenda items 10, 51, 94, 100, 110 and 154.

(*Signed*) Nizar **Hamdoon**
Ambassador
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Annex

Study on the repercussions of the unjust economic embargo imposed on the Iraqi people in the economic, health, environmental, agricultural and cultural sectors

Since the adoption of Security Council resolution 661 (1990) of 6 August 1990, the comprehensive sanctions regime has held the Iraqi people in a merciless grip. The Security Council was not satisfied with this resolution, but adopted further resolutions to complement the first and tighten the stranglehold of the sanctions. These further resolutions are Security Council resolution 665 (1990) of 25 August 1990, that includes a paragraph demanding the full and immediate implementation of the provisions laid down in resolution 661 (1990), and resolution 670 (1990) of 25 September 1990, that expands the sanctions to include all means of transport, including aircraft, and calls upon all States to detain any ships of Iraqi registry which enter their ports.

Within a very short period of time, therefore, the Security Council adopted three resolutions imposing comprehensive and harsh sanctions on all aspects of the life of the entire Iraqi people. This people was ready to embark upon a new century, in good standing in the ranks of States advancing towards development, prosperity and scientific, economic and social growth. In consequence of the harsh conditions resulting from these sanctions, which have been in force for so many long years, and to which there is no end in sight, the Iraqi people finds itself regressing, and losing all the fundamental requirements of human life.

The comprehensive sanctions were not lifted once the reasons that had impelled the Security Council to adopt the resolution pursuant to which they were imposed no longer existed: they were continued in a harsher and more severe form, in particular subsequent to the adoption of Security Council resolution 687 (1991) on 3 April 1991. This annulled the basis for the imposition of the sanctions, and linked the issue of the lifting of the sanctions, in a completely arbitrary manner, to the extent of Iraq's compliance with other, subsequent Security Council resolutions, including resolutions subsequent to resolution 687 (1991) itself.

This made the criteria on which a Security Council decision to lift the sanctions would be based look like a moving sandhill which keeps changing shape with every breath of wind that blows from any direction, but continues to serve the interests of the United States of America, which is using various manoeuvres in an attempt to obstruct any move in the Security Council to lift or ease the embargo on Iraq.

This comprehensive embargo has been in place for more than eight years, and it is only possible to guess at the condition of the Iraqi people, living completely deprived of all the necessities for a decent human life. War destroyed the basis of the economic infrastructure, while the years of the embargo and prolonged deprivation have finished off anything that was missed by the Allies' bombs during their random, blanket bombing of the whole of Iraq and their indiscriminate destruction of the majority of vital economic, cultural, humanitarian and religious installations.

United Nations agencies and delegations from international humanitarian organizations working in Iraq have witnessed the scale of the overwhelming destruction to which the country has been subjected. They have also seen that the effects of the comprehensive embargo are exacerbated day after day, and have had a very obvious impact on the people of Iraq, in particular on children, women and the elderly. These effects are embodied in the ever-present spectre of death that continually looms before huge numbers of the people of

Iraq, because of malnutrition, lack of medicines, the imminent breakdown of the economic infrastructure and the collapse of basic health services.

Diseases that had disappeared more than 50 years ago from the records kept by health agencies in Iraq are beginning to reappear in the country, in addition to new diseases never previously experienced in Iraq, and unknown to doctors or specialists anywhere in the world. These disasters affect the people of Iraq indiscriminately.

The health sector is not the sector most affected by the disastrous sanctions, since these have affected social, scientific, educational and environmental aspects of life, quite apart from their effects on the economic infrastructure. The breakdown of this infrastructure has led to a collapse on all sides that threatens the very existence of the people of Iraq, and amounts to a systematic war of attrition, in the full sight and hearing of the whole world, on the pretext of compliance with Security Council resolutions.

Under pressure from world public opinion reacting to the pictures of humanitarian suffering being endured by the people of Iraq, a farcical attempt is being made by the Security Council to implement the oil-for-food programme. This has been unable to go even a small way towards snatching the Iraqi people from the claws of the menace that is stalking them as a result of the embargo. This is because of the positions adopted by the representatives of the United States of America and the United Kingdom, who use every means to obstruct the smooth progression of contracts, using flimsy excuses and pretexts of which the aim is to exacerbate the suffering of the Iraqi people and increase the burden of the sanctions.

The sanctions imposed on Iraq know no humanitarian or time constraints. In contravention of all the principles and values for which the United Nations calls in its various organizations and assemblies, malnutrition, lack of food, the collapse of the economy, increased poverty and the breakdown of the economic, cultural and scientific structure caused by the sanctions have increased the daily suffering of hundreds of thousands of children, women and ill people.

Set forth below is a summary of the disastrous effects of the sanctions which have been imposed on Iraq in the name of the United Nations for more than eight years, regardless of the fact that Iraq has complied with all the fundamental requirements of the relevant Security Council resolutions, and that there is no legal, legislative or moral justification for endlessly maintaining the embargo on the people of Iraq in order to gain the private political goals of some parties, which are very far from being those of Security Council resolutions and international legitimacy.

1. *The health sector*

Health conditions in Iraq have deteriorated catastrophically as a result of the war and the embargo, and because of lack of medicines and the collapse of medical services. This has led to an alarming increase in the incidence of various illnesses and a rise in the death rate, in particular amongst children. Between the beginning of the embargo and June 1998, 390,614 children under the age of five have died, and a further 615,548 over the age of five.

The World Health Organization, in its reports for 1997, warned that the effects of the current situation in Iraq would lead to the imminent collapse of the health care system, which is crippled by lack of medicines and basic medical equipment and spare parts. Furthermore, there is a complete dearth of all the requisites and medical and technical necessities for the running of hospitals. Poor nutrition has increased the severity of the collapse of the health sector and has lowered resistance to all types of disease. The embargo has led to a large increase in communicable diseases, and the health services have been unable to control or

treat them, on account of the increasing gravity of environmental conditions at the most basic level: water purification and sewage systems have broken down. Environmental pollution has led to an increase in the incidence of cancer, while Iraqi health institutions are unable to provide the medicines or other means to treat such disease. The infant mortality rate has increased to 92 per 1,000 live births, and the ratio of low-birth-weight babies has increased from 5 to 21 per cent. Diarrhoea is now a major cause of child mortality, and perinatal mortality in women has increased as a result of malnutrition and the collapse of health care.

2. *The environmental sector*

As a result of the military aggression that began on 17 January 1991, the environment in Iraq has been exposed to appalling degradation, the effects of which many international reports affirm will last for generations. The quantity of explosives dropped over Iraq amounts to seven times the destructive power of the nuclear bomb that was dropped on Hiroshima in Japan. Furthermore, aerial bombardments destroyed stockpiles of *matériel*, industrial and oil facilities and electricity generation plants, leading to the release of thousands of tons of toxins into the air, the water and the earth.

In their war against Iraq, the Allied forces used internationally proscribed weapons such as missiles containing depleted uranium. This was the first time that such weapons had been used. Studies undertaken by experts show that this anti-personnel and anti-environmental weapon has extremely long-lasting effects.

United Kingdom officials have admitted on a number of occasions that depleted uranium missiles were used. The most recent of these admissions appeared in a letter dated 16 June 1998 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations, Sir John Weston, which appeared as document S/1998/517.

The use of depleted uranium-based ammunition against Iraq has led to an increase in the incidence of cancer, miscarriage, disorders of the nervous system and foetal abnormalities.

The damage sustained by the electricity generation plants has halted the work of heavy water treatment units in cities and industrial areas, and huge quantities of untreated, dangerous waste have seeped directly into rivers. Plants for the pumping of clean drinking water and sewage are unable to function as a result of the scarcity of electrical power, forcing people to take contaminated, unpurified water directly from rivers, which has led to the spread of epidemics and contagious diseases. Furthermore, municipal services have a reduced capacity for dealing with waste matter, because of a shortage of equipment and lack of spare parts.

Efforts to combat desertification have been delayed as a consequence of a severe shortage of irrigation pumps and a decrease in green areas.

3. *The economic sector*

As a result of the conditions created by the embargo in a country that was fundamentally dependent on imports from abroad, the Iraqi economy has entered a state of anarchy, with an alarming rate of inflation. The loss of Iraq's right to export oil or any other products has led to a scarcity of hard currency at the State level and in the private sector. This has forced the State to use local currency to finance Iraqi imports, thereby devaluing this currency outside Iraq and reducing its purchasing power.

The halt or fall in production has led to widespread unemployment, with all its attendant negative effects on the whole of society. Furthermore, Iraqi means of production are progressively being made obsolete by the lack of spare parts and maintenance. The majority of production facilities that rely on imported materials in order to function have been forced to halt operations.

The long-term effects of such progressive obsolescence means in reality the destruction of the industrial base and the entire infrastructure of the country, painting a gloomy picture for future generations. The report issued by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (World Disasters Report 1998) referred to the economic situation, saying that although Iraq is an oil-producing country, since it has been subject to the embargo its economy has been in fetters, electricity is rationed and hunger, poverty and malnutrition are widespread. Millions have become permanently impoverished, subsisting from day to day on what little they can get by selling their jewellery, televisions, furniture and clothes.

4. *The agricultural sector*

The embargo has had highly deleterious effects on the agricultural sector, in particular on crop protection, animal resources and the irrigation system. Agricultural output has decreased alarmingly as a result of shortage of seed, lack of spray pumps and the breakdown of agricultural aircraft. Iraq is not allowed to import material for the treatment of plants. The quality of agricultural production has also declined as a result of Iraq's inability to import improved seeds.

With respect to livestock resources, Iraq is suffering from a major fall in the production of meat and other livestock products caused by the low rate of mass protective and curative vaccination, the lack of laboratory tests and the consequent risk of livestock resource loss.

Irrigation systems throughout Iraq have been rendered useless as a result of the reduction in capacity of pumping stations and the scarcity of the machines and heavy equipment necessary to carry out irrigation projects and reclaim land. Work on dams and barrages has been halted, and the water monitoring and purification system has broken down. The chemical analyses needed to establish the purity of water cannot be provided.

5. *The cultural sector*

Despite the best endeavours of the Iraqi Government to minimize the effects of the embargo on education and culture, suffering remains severe, and the sanctions have had a serious impact on the levels of educational and cultural services provided to the Iraqi people.

Educational institutions such as schools, institutes, colleges, kindergartens and cultural facilities have been destroyed by heavy aerial bombardment and have been unable to perform their educational role adequately. There is a lack of educational and laboratory materials and equipment, and of the essentials needed for libraries, the printing of educational books, the production of furniture and everything else connected with the education operation. Implementation of education plans has been obstructed and there has been a reduction in the provision of educational necessities and the level of student services. Large numbers of students have dropped out.

The embargo has also led to the halting of educational contacts with the outside world and of Iraq's participation in international conferences and activities. Other States have been prevented from offering scholarships to Iraqi students, and Iraq has been unable to receive scientific publications and reports.